ART BY ICHIHA AKIZUKI
WRITTEN BY MAI MOCHIZUKI
CHARACTER DESIGNS BY
SHIZU YAMAUCHI

CHAPTER 22:
KABUKI LOVE (PART 2)

November 30th.

The first day of the kaomise.

EVERYTHING FEELS MORE FESTIVE THAN USUAL.

INDEED.

EVERYONE'S ALL DRESSED UP JUST FOR TODAY.

WHAT?!

YOU LOOK LOVELY AS WELL, AOI-SAN.

THAT OUTFIT TRULY SUITS YOU.

Y-YOU'RE ONLY FLATTERING ME.

THERE. I'LL SIMPLY PLAY IT OFF...

IT'S KNOWN AS A "MANEKI."

OH? WHAT IS THIS?

IT'S NOT USUALLY ON DISPLAY, IS IT?

...SO THAT THE AUDIENCE CAN LEARN THE ACTORS' NAMES.

IT ANNOUNCES THE ENTIRE CAST OF THE KAOMISE...

GOODNESS.

SO EVEN THIS IS SPECIAL, TOO...

IT'S ALL SO VERY KYOTO.

They're known as hanawa elsewhere.

CONGRATULATIONS FOR THE ACTORS ARE ATTACHED TO "HORSES" MADE FROM WOVEN BAMBOO.

IT'S A CUSTOM UNIQUE TO THE MINAMI-ZA THEATER.

TAKEUMA.

AND WHAT'S THAT?

WOW!
はは

THE KAOMISE REALLY IS SPECIAL!

OH.
ああ

AOI-SAN, LOOK OVER THERE.

THAT'S KISUKE-SAN'S FIANCÉE, THE FORMER MODEL.

WOW!
ふぅ

I BET THEY MAKE A GREAT COUPLE.

SHE'S A REAL TRADITIONAL BEALITY.

I AGREE.

AOI-SAN, WOULD YOU MIND GOING TO BUY A PAMPHLET?

O-OH, SURE THING.

BUT DO YOU THINK KISUKE-SAN WILL BE ALL RIGHT?

HIS ANNOUNCE-MENT... IT'S TODAY, ISN'T IT?

YES, LATER DURING THE EVENING PER-FORMANCE.

WE'LL BE SEEING THE DAYTIME ONE.

YOUR TAKING OF THE NAME ICHIKATA KISUKE IS UNACCEPTABLE. REFUSE THE SUCCESSION. YOUR ONSTAGE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE STOPPED.

REALLY, I GAVE HIM THE BEST ADVICE I COULD.

ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS PRAY NOTHING HAPPENS.

OH!

HUH?

KAJIWARA-SAN, WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

ARE THEY IN THE ENTERTAIN-MENT INDUSTRY TOO?

AKIHITO-SAN, YOU'RE HERE TOO!

NAH. THESE ARE MY FRIENDS.

I FIGURED I OUGHTA COME SEE KISUKE-KUN'S BIG DEBUT, YEAH.

OH, DO PARDON ME...

IS SHE A FRIEND OF AKIHITO-SAN'S?

I'M YAGASHIRA KIYOTAKA.

AND THIS IS MASHIRO AOI, A COWORKER OF MINE.

I'M KANO AIRI.

I WORK AS A PIN-UP IDOL.

I WAS SO THRILLED TO MEET A FAMOUS ACTOR LIKE KAJIWARA-SAN HERE.

I RAN INTO AIRI-SAN HERE EARLIER.

WE'RE BOTH IN THE INDUSTRY, SO I THOUGHT I'D SAY HI.

THAT'S RIGHT.

BLUSH

HEY, I'M NOT THAT FAMOUS...

STILL, I CAN'T BELIEVE THERE ARE PEOPLE SO YOUNG IN THE CROWD...

KISUKE-KUN REALLY MUST BE POPULAR.

I DIDN'T REALLY COME HERE FOR KISUKE-SAN... BUT IT WOULD BE RUDE TO DENY IT.

ARE YOU A FAN OF KISUKE-SAN'S, AIRI-SAN?

A FAN? NO...

THE ONLY THING I WANNA SEE THAT PIECE OF SHIT IN IS HELL!

WHA?

IT'S ABOUT TIME WE GO IN, RIGHT?

OUR SEATS ARE CLOSE BY, AIRI-SAN, SO I'LL GO WITH YOU.

OH, SURE THING!

BUT THIS IS HIS BIG MOMENT, SO I'LL BEHAVE MYSELF.

FOR NOW.

...

SEE YOU!

CATCH YOU GUYS LATER!

DID I SAY SOMETHING WRONG?

DUN

HOLMES-SAN...

ICHIKATA KISUKE? WASN'T EVERYONE TALKING ABOUT HIS AFFAIR WITH THAT PIN-UP IDOL NOT LONG AGO?

OH...

AIRI-SAN JUST SO HAPPENS TO BE THE MODEL KISUKE-SAN WAS SUPPOSEDLY DATING BEFORE HIS ENGAGEMENT WAS ANNOUNCED.

IN OTHER WORDS, SHE'S HIS EX...

And here I went and asked if she was his fan...

GLOOM

Of course.

NOW, LET US FIND OUR SEATS AS WELL.

YOU DID NOTHING WRONG, AOI-SAN.

I'M SURE SHE WASN'T OFFENDED EITHER.

YOU THINK SO?

What?

AREN'T THESE, LIKE, REALLY NICE?

WOW, EVEN THE THEATER IS AMAZING!

WHAT?!

THE BEST IN THE HOUSE.

I WANTED YOU TO BE ABLE TO SEE EVERYTHING, SO I GOT US FRONT ROW BALCONY SEATS.

"SPARE NO EXPENSE ON ART AND ENTERTAINMENT THAT ENRICH THE SOUL."

BESIDES, IT'S PART OF THE YAGASHIRA FAMILY MOTTO.

A- ARE YOU SURE IT'S OKAY FOR US TO BE SITTING HERE?

AOI- SAN, THIS IS A SPECIAL TREAT.

...AND THE BOX SEATS CLOSEST TO THE HANAMICHI RUNWAY, RIGHT?

SO THE BEST SEATS ARE HERE AT THE FRONT OF THE BALCONY...

...ICHIKATA TOZABURO- SAN AND HIS WIFE SITTING DOWN THERE.

YOU CAN SEE THE FAMOUS DEVOTED COUPLE ...

THAT'S RIGHT, AOI-SAN.

YOU CAN TELL SHE USED TO BE AN ACTRESS.

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL EVEN FROM AFAR.

WELL, IF ISN'T KIYOTAKA-KUN.

AND AOI-CHAN TOO.

REI-SAN!

IT IS KISUKE-KUN'S BIG DAY, AFTER ALL.

I THOUGHT I'D TREAT MYSELF TO BOTH THE MATINEE AND EVENING SHOWS.

WHAT A COINCI-DENCE.

SO YOU'RE HERE TO SEE THE SHOW TOO, REI-SAN?

NO, I GOT THEM FOR MYSELF.

I'M A FORMER TAKARAZUKA ACTRESS, REMEMBER? I JUST LOVE THE THEATER.

A FULL DAY OF KABUKI SOUNDS WONDER-FUL.

DID KISUKE-SAN PROVIDE THE TICKETS?

NOT TO MENTION... I'M A FAN OF KISUKE-KUN.

"IT SEEMED EVEN HE AND ASAMIYA REI-SAN HAVE A HISTORY TOGETHER."

ERK

YEAH...

I'M SURE KISUKE-SAN...

...WOULD BE HAPPY TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT...

AOI-CHAN? WHAT'S WRONG?

HUH?! O-OH, NOTHING!

H-HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO TALK TO HER?!

THAT MEAN SHE'S ALSO HIS EX...

THAT'S RIGHT! HOLMES-SAN SAID KISUKE-SAN PROBABLY DATED REI-SAN, TOO!

I MADE A RATHER RUDE ASSUMP-TION.

MY APOLOGIES. I WASN'T EXPECTING TO RUN INTO YOU AGAIN LIKE THIS.

DID... KIYOTAKA-KUN SAY SOMETHING TO YOU, BY ANY CHANCE?

YOU WERE RIGHT.

KISUKE-SAN AND I DATED UNTIL RECENTLY.

SO YOU REALLY ARE A GOOD DETECTIVE.

WELL, I WASN'T EXACTLY HAPPY TO HEAR ABOUT THE ENGAGE-MENT.

BUT WE STARTED DATING WITH A MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.

BUT YOU'RE STILL COMING TO SEE HIM PERFORM ...

YOU... YOU AREN'T ANGRY WITH HIM?

HUH?!

I'VE KNOWN ABOUT HIS FIANCÉE AND THE PIN-UP IDOL FOR SOME TIME AS WELL.

J TH- J THAT'S ...

HE ALSO CAN'T HOLD HIS LIQUOR.

WHEN HE'S DRUNK, HE STARTS TALKING ABOUT OTHER WOMEN.

KISUKE-SAN'S NOT GOOD AT HIDING THINGS ...

HE'S RATHER TRANS-PARENT, YOU COULD SAY.

"SHE'S SO BEAU-TIFUL."

"THAT'S WHAT I LOVE ABOUT HER." SO ON AND SO FORTH.

YET KISUKE-SAN HAD NOTHING BUT PRAISE.

WHAT'S FUNNY IS THAT, NOR-MALLY,

MEN EITHER TRASH THE OTHER WOMAN OR TRY TO HIDE THEIR INDISCRE-TIONS...

AND WHEN I HEARD ALL THAT...

IT MADE IT SO HARD FOR ME TO HATE HIM.

BUT THAT'S ALL IN THE PAST NOW.

LET'S LEAVE IT AT THAT.

REI-SAN...

GIGGLE

THANK YOU, AOI-CHAN.

REI-SAN!

IF YOU EVER NEED ANY HELP, YOU CAN ALWAYS ASK ME!

SHE'S PUTTING ON A CHEERFUL SMILE...

BUT THERE'S NO WAY IT WASN'T PAINFUL FOR HER

I'M NOT SURE IF I'LL BE ABLE TO FOLLOW IT IN PERSON...

THAT REMINDS ME. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A KABUKI PERFORMANCE, AOI-CHAN?

WELL... NOT LIKE THIS.

Only on television!

AN AUDIO GUIDE!

EARPHONE GUIDE

I RENTED AN AUDIO GUIDE EARLIER TO HELP WITH EXACTLY THAT.

NO NEED TO WORRY, AOI-SAN.

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

...AND GET THE UTMOST OUT OF THE PERFOR-MANCE.

IT'LL EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON SO CAN UNDERSTAND THE DIALOGUE ...

I ASSUME YOU ARRANGED FOR A BENTO LUNCH AS WELL?

YOU CERTAINLY CAME PREPARED.

WH-WHAT ABOUT LUNCH?

IMPRESSIVE, AS EXPECTED.

I HAD MY FAVORITE RESTAURANT PREPARE SOME.

BUT OF COURSE.

I ALSO NOTICED THERE'S NOT JUST ONE PERFORMANCE.

THAT'S VERY DIFFERENT FROM A NORMAL THEATER.

BUT PART OF THE KABUKI EXPERIENCE IS ORDERING OR BRINGING IN A BENTO LUNCH.

SOME PEOPLE GO OUT TO EAT INSTEAD,

DURING THE INTERMISSION, WE'RE ALLOWED TO EAT AT OUR SEATS.

SHOW 1 第一幕 THE TWO WANKYUS 二人椀久

SHOW 2 第二幕 YOSHITSUNE AND THE THOUSAND CHERRY TREES 義経千本桜 川連法眼

SHOW 3 第三幕 仮名手本忠臣蔵 道行旅

IT'S TYPICAL FOR KABUKI TO HAVE MULTIPLE PERFORMANCES IN ONE DAY.

YES.

OH, THAT... I THOUGHT IT SOUNDED FAMILIAR.

THIS HERE, *KIYOMORI CALLS BACK THE SETTING SUN*, WAS THE SUBJECT OF THE HANGING SCROLL THAT AKIHITO-SAN'S BROTHER FUYUKI WAS LEFT.

SHOW 1

第一二人椀久

THE TWO WANKYUS

...IS THE ONE KISUKE-KUN'S OLDER BROTHER, MATSUNOSUKE, WILL BE STARRING IN,

THE TWO WANKYUS.

KISUKE-KUN IS PERFORMING IN *YOSHITSUNE AND THE THOUSAND CHERRY TREES.*

THE OTHER SHOW OF NOTE...

KISUKE-SAN'S OLDER BROTHER...?

"I'M SORRY TO SAY IT, BUT IN TERMS OF SHEER TALENT, HE WAS A SERIOUS CONTENDER FOR THE NAME."

I WONDER WHAT KIND OF PERFORMER HE IS...

"The first [illegible]."

Wanya Kyuemon is a wealthy merchant known far and wide.

But he meets the kuruwa-no-tayu* Matsu-yama...

...and becomes so infatuated that he begins spending money extrava-

When he won't listen to even his parents' reason,

Wankyu's family throws him in the dungeon...

...where he goes mad with longing for Matsu-yama.

*prostitute in the red-light district

One night,

Wankyu slips out of his prison...

...and glimpses Matsuyama on the beach next to a large pine tree.

The world of the red-light district where they'd spent so many wonderful hours together surrounded her.

...and all that remains is the sound of the waves and the wind in the pines.

Suddenly, Matsuyama disappears...

But it was all just a dream.

Wankyu awakens, thinking of Matsuyama...

...and is stricken with grief.

MATSU-NOSUKE-SAN WAS GREAT, WASN'T HE?

HE SEEMED SO FILLED WITH SORROW AND LOVE FOR HER...

I'M REALLY IMPRESSED.

HE IS A REMARKABLE PERFORMER, YES.

CLAP

CLAP

CLAP

CLAP

CLAP

CLAP

...BY THAT LITTLE PLAYBOY.

HE MUSTA HATED HAVIN' THE NAME ICHIKATA KISUKE STOLEN FROM HIM...

ON TALENT ALONE, HE'S DEFINITELY HIS BROTHER'S BETTER

THAT MATSUNO-SUKE-SAN SURE IS SOMETHIN'.

SO THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO FEEL THAT WAY...

HE'LL BE PLAYING TWO ROLES: YOSHITSUNE'S SUBORDINATE SATO TADANOBU, AND GENKURO THE FOX.

KISUKE-KUN IS UP NEXT.

"Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees." Scene: Kawatsura Hogen's residence.

When Shizuka Gozen learned of this...

She went with Yoshitsune's retainer, Sato Tadanobu, to reunite with him on Mt. Yoshino.

He took refuge at the estate of Kawatsura Hogen on Mt. Yoshino.

but was forced to flee the capital because his brother Yoritomo feared that he might rebel.

Taira no Yoshitsune was hailed as a war hero following the Genpei War,

Then something strange happened.

Sato Tadanobu was already there, having come straight from his hometown...

And the Tadanobu that had escorted Shizuka Gozen to the mountain...

...was suddenly nowhere to be found.

And so she strikes the Hatsune Drum.

BONG

Shizuka recalls that the Tadanobu who had vanished...

...was drawn to the "Hatsune Drum" that Yoshitsune had entrusted to her.

Yoshitsune and Shizuka both thought it suspicious.

WHOOSH

SHNK

When she does, Tadanobu seemingly appears out of thin air.

OOOH

AAAH

...is the son of a fox whose pelt had been used to make the Hatsune Drum.

This Tadanobu, as it turns out...

Indeed, it is the fox Genkuro in disguise.

Genkuro had accompanied Shizuka, drawn to the drum made from his parent's hide.

Shizuka gives the precious Hatsune Drum to Genkuro.

Struck by the fox's devotion...

...and uses his supernatural powers to scatter them and send them running.

Overjoyed, Genkuro reveals the plans of the evil monks who are after Yoshi-tsune.

He invites the monks into the estate...

He then thanks Yoshitsune and Shizuka Gozen.

And, with the drum in hand...

He leaves to return home.

AERIAL STUNTS IN KABUKI?!

AMAZING!

IT REALLY IS A HIGHLIGHT.

Matsuno-suke-san's acting was wonderful...

But so is Kisuke-san's.

He seems to have a certain way of drawing the eye.

Is this a real actor's true charm?

DIP

SNAP

YOUR TAKING OF THE NAME ICHIKATA KISUKE IS UNACCEPTABLE. REFUSE THE SUCCESSION. YOUR ONSTAGE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE STOPPED.

一方キスケを襲名を拒否

襲名を拒否

お前が一方キスケ

SLAM

CHAPTER 22
END